

Moshe Sharett-A Brief Biography & Quotes

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BASED On Declassified Israeli Documents & Personal Diaries



1894-1965

Moshe Sharett (Shertok) was a Ukrainian born Jew who directed the Jewish Agency's Political Department from 1933 until May 1948. On May 14th, 1948, he became the first Israeli Foreign Minister, and for a brief period between 1954-1955 he was the second Israeli Prime Minister. After being politically marginalized by the hawks (i.e. Ben-Gurion, Dayan, Begin, Golda Meir) in the Israeli Cabinet, he resigned office and became the Chairman of the Jewish Agency between 1956-1960.

Sharett's policies with regard to the neighboring Arab states were characterized by vision and pragmatism, but this form of diplomacy was never given a chance by the hardliners, who mostly believed that "Arabs respect only the language of force". Sharett attempted to have policies based on engagement, rather than belligerence and humiliation, with the neighbor Arab states. In that regard, he stated in the 1950s:

"[The Arabs have] extremely subtle understanding and delicate senses. [It was true he conceded, that] there is a wall between us and them and there is tragic development in that this wall is getting taller. But, nevertheless, if this wall can be prevented from getting taller, it is sacred duty to do so, if at all possible." ([Iron Wall](#), p. 97)

Sharett was one of the few in the Middle East to recognize that terror and counter terror between Palestinians and Israelis is an endless cycle of violence, which (as he predicted) if not controlled would become a way of life. His political and diplomatic wisdom was always portrayed by the Israeli mainstream as "weak & cowardly", and Jabotinsky's "[IRON WALL](#)" doctrine has dominated the Israeli political scene to this day.

Contrary to [Ben-Gurion](#), Sharett befriended Palestinian Arabs, spent some of his childhood in a Palestinian Arab village, spoke Arabic fluently, and was well versed in Arab history, culture, and politics.

What has been written above may have given the reader the impression that Moshe Sharett was a "white dove", which cannot be further from the truth. It's true that he may have been the savviest Israeli diplomat ever, one who always advocated the use of diplomacy over force. It's also true that he may had difference with the Israeli hawkish mainstream, but make no mistake about it, Sharett was an ardent Zionist. Mr. Sharett was staunchly committed to the "transfer solution" to the so called "Arab question". For example, during the 1948 war,

- Sharett was an active member in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd "[Transfer Committees](#)",
- Sharett was the draftee of the "Absentees' & Present Absentees' Property Law of 1950" which gave the "Jewish state" the "legal framework" to dispossess the Palestinian people from their properties in the "Jewish state", and

- Sharett was the person who engineered blocking the refugees' return, which has been the Israeli policy to the present day.

So Sharett may have differed tactically with Ben-Gurion and his ilk, on the other hand, strategically Sharett was committed to the concept a Jewish majority in Palestine as any Zionist hawk. When a "Jewish majority" in Palestine was not attainable based on Jewish immigration and natural population growth, he advocated the use of force to ethnically cleanse and to dispossess the Palestinian people. As you read the below quotes, an accurate picture of Sharett's mindset will emerge.

Famous Quotes

Like the rest of the Zionist leadership, Moshe Sharett acknowledged the "physical" existence of the Palestinian Arabs, but not as a people who deserve any political rights. Contrary to the common Zionist myth, Sharett privately admitted in 1914 that Zionist Jews "have not come to an empty country". He stated:

We have forgotten that we have not come to an empty land to inherit it, but we have come to conquer a country from people inhabiting it, that governs it by the virtue of its language and savage culture Recently there has been appearing in our newspapers the clarification about "the mutual misunderstanding" between us and the Arabs, about "common interests" [and] about "the possibility of unity and peace between two fraternal peoples." [But] we must not allow ourselves to be deluded by such illusive hopes for if we cease to look upon our land, the Land of Israel, as ours alone and we allow a partner into our estate- all content and meaning will be lost to our enterprise. ([Righteous Victims](#), p. 91)

Ironically, may Israelis, Zionists, and Jews still adamantly argue that Palestine was empty until the Israeli Jews settled the country, [click here](#) to read our response to this argument.

Privately, Zionists often are quite pragmatic and honest amongst themselves, contrary to the facade they portray in public. For example, in the quote below Moshe Sharett privately argued that Palestinians would reject partitioning their country. He stated in a speech to the Zionist Actions Committee, the supreme policy making body between the Zionists congresses and the World Zionist Organization, on April 22, 1937 in Jerusalem:

"The proposed Jewish state [referring to the proposed 1937 [Peel Commission](#) partition plan] territory would not be continuous; its borders would be twisted and broken; the question of defending the frontier line would pose enormous difficulties the frontier line would separate villages from their fields Moreover the [Palestinian] Arab reaction would be negative because they would lose everything and gain almost nothing in contrast to us they would lose totally that part of Palestine which they consider to be an Arab country and are fighting to keep it such ... They would lose the richest part of Palestine; they would lose major Arab assets, the orange plantations, the commercial and industrial centers and the most important sources of revenue for their government which would become impoverished; they would lose most of the coastal area, which would also be a loss to the hinterland Arab states..... It would mean that they would be driven back to the desert ('Zorkim Otam') A Jewish territory [state] with fewer Arab subjects would make it easy for us but it would also mean a procrustean bed for us while a plan based on expansion into larger territory would mean more [Palestinian] Arab subjects in the Jewish territory.

For the next 10 years the possibility of transferring the Arab population would not be 'practical'. As for the long-term future: I am prepared to see in this a vision, not a mystical way but in a realistic way, of a population exchange on a much more important scale and including larger territories. As for now, we must not forget who would have to exchange the land? those villages which live more than others on irrigation, on orange and fruit plantations, in houses built near water wells and pumping stations, on livestock and property and easy access to markets. Where would they go? What would they receive in return? ... This would be such an uprooting, such a shock, the likes of which had never occurred and could drown the whole thing in rivers of blood. At this stage let us not entertain ourselves with the analogy of population transfer between Turkey and Greece; there

were different conditions there. Those Arabs who would remain would revolt; would the Jewish state be able to suppress the revolt without assistance from the British Army?" ([Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 59-60)

Although Palestinians' rejection of any partition plan seemed logical to many Zionist leaders as early as 1937, Zionists wonder why Palestinians and Arabs rejected the UN GA proposed partition plan in 1947? [Click here](#) to read our detailed response to this argument.

Soon after the outbreak of the First Palestinian Intifada in 1936, Moshe Sharett explained how the fear of Zionists had gripped Palestinian politics, and how all sectors of the Palestinian society had been affected by the influx of Jewish immigration. He stated:

"Fear is the main factor in [Palestinian] Arab politics. . . . There is no Arab who is not harmed by Jews' entry into Palestine." ([Righteous Victims](#), p. 136)

Ironically, often Zionists claim that Palestinian nationalism never existed as a justification for denying Palestinians the right of self-determination. On the other hand, as we have seen in the previous quote, Palestinian nationalism was a live and well as early as 1936, [click here](#) if you wish to learn more about this subject.

On February 5, 1937, Moshe Sharett explained how the "transfer" of Palestinians, as was proposed by [Peel Commission](#), would stiffen Palestinians' resistance to the British Mandate. He stated:

"First of all, almost 300,000 [Palestinian] Arabs will exist under Jewish rule. It is not so easy to carry out [population] exchange And even if they [the British] indeed would want to uproot the [Palestinian] Arab population by force, this would result in such bloodshed that the current rebellion in the country would be almost nothing in comparison. Such a thing could not be done without British forces, at least in the transition period. . . . It is a big question whether [Britain] would have the courage to carry this out." ([Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 58)

Almost a month before the British [Peel Commission](#) proposed partitioning Palestine in 1937, Moshe Sharett wrote of the discussion Zionists had with the commission regarding the "transfer" of Palestinians to Transjordan, and about the commission's impression of the Zionist proposals. He wrote:

"we talked about the question of partition in connection with Transjordan. Wadsworth said that it was known to him that the [British] Government was very impressed by the proposal contained in the memorandum that we had submitted to the [Peel] "Royal Commission" concerning the transfer of the [Palestinian] Arabs from the Western Eretz Yisrael [i.e. Palestine] to Transjordan in order to evacuate the place for new Jewish settlers. They saw this proposal as a constructive plan indeed." ([Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 56)

In June 1938, Moshe Sharett stressed the importance of creating a "Jewish state" based on a Jewish majority. He stated:

"The critical problem is a parliamentarism in the Jewish state and in the transition period to it it is necessary that an institution of government should be set up, and one of its functions will be to prepare the parliamentary regime. In this transition period also we will know who are the [Palestinian] Arabs who would agree to remain as citizens of the Jewish state and their number would certainly be much smaller than we think today. By the reduction of the [Palestinian] Arabs on the one hand and Jewish immigration in the transition period on the other, we will ensure an absolute Hebrew majority in a parliamentary regime." ([Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 108-109)

On July 10, 1941 Moshe Sharett instructed [Yosef Weitz](#), one of the architects of the "transfer solution", how to conduct the 2nd "Transfer Committee's" work without attracting attention. He told Weitz:

"The [Transfer] Committee must work quietly and without publicity but it could not work in complete mystery and without assistance from the public authorities, especially now, during the [second war] war. Therefore, contact ought to be made with the [British military] authorities in Egypt ." ([Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 134)

There was the first, the second, and the third "Transfer committees", and the latter was the one which was executed during the 1948 war, [click here](#) if you wish to learn more.

Moshe Sharett stated that "transferring" the Palestinian people "could be the crowning achievement" for Zionism. He publicly declared in 1947:

"Transfer could be the crowning achievement, the final stage in the development of [our] policy, but certainly not the point of departure. By [speaking publicly and prematurely] we could mobilizing vast forces against the matter and cause it to fail, in advance." ([Righteous Victims](#), p. 254)

Similarly, he also stated:

"When the Jewish state is established--it is very possible that the result will be transfer of [the Palestinian] Arabs." ([Righteous Victims](#), p. 254)

Blocking Refugees' Return

Since the "crowning achievement" for Zionism was the "transfer" of Palestinians out of their homes, Israelis and Zionists aimed to block refugees' return since they had been "miraculously" cleared from "Eretz Yisrael". Moshe Sharett justified this policy because if "the return tide starts, it will be impossible to stem it". Consequently, blocking refugee' return was the Israeli policy to the present day. In August 18 1948, Moshe Sharett wrote to [Chaim Weizmann](#), explaining the Israeli government's determination to block the Palestinian Arab refugees' return:

"With regard to the refugees, we are determined to be adamant while the war lasts. Once the return tide starts, it will be impossible to stem it, and it will prove our undoing. As for the future, we are equally determined to explore all possibilities of getting rid, once and for all, of the huge [Palestinian] Arab minority [referring to the Palestinian Israeli citizens of Israel] which originally threatened us. What can be achieved in this period of storm and stress [referring to the 1948 war] will be quite unattainable once conditions get stabilized. A group of people [headed by Yosef Weitz] has already started working on the study of resettlement possibilities [for the Palestinian refugees] in other lands . . . What such permanent resettlement of 'Israeli' Arabs in the neighboring territories will mean in terms of making land available in Israel for settlement of our own people requires no emphasis." ([Benny Morris](#), p. 149-150 & [Simha Flapan](#), p. 105)

Similarly, Moshe Sharett argued that Israelis should take advantage of the "momentous chance" (a term that is synonymous with "transferring" Palestinians out of their homes) which history had presented the "Jewish state". Sharett explained that this "momentous chance" was "swift and unexpected" as if the Haganah, Stern, and Irgan terror gangs were angels, who played no role in "transferring" the Palestinian people out of their homes, farms, and business. In a letter to the chairman of the World Jewish Congress, Nahum Goldmann, Moshe Sharett explained the Israeli Cabinet's future policies towards the return of the refugees. He wrote on June 15, 1948 :

"The opportunities which the present position open up for a lasting and radical solution of the most vexing problem of the Jewish state [i.e. Palestinian Arab minority problem] are so far-reaching as to take one's breath away. Even of if a certain backlash is unavoidable, we must make the most of the momentous chance with which history has presented us so swiftly and so unexpectedly." ([Benny Morris](#), p. 140)

There were calls by members of the MAPAM party for the return of [Jaffa's](#) "peace minded" Palestinian refugees, and in response, Moshe Sharett agreed with Ben-Gurion for rejecting Palestine return. He stated during a Cabinet

meeting on June 16, 1948:

"Can we imagine a return to the status quo ante?" He asked. It was inconceivable. Rather, the government should now persuade the Yishuv (Palestinian Jews before 1948) of "the enormous importance of this [demographic] change in terms of the solidity of the state structure and [of] the solution of crucial social and political problems." Israel should be ready to pay compensation for the *abandoned land* but "they will not return. [That] is our policy. They are not returning." ([Benny Morris](#), p. 141)

During the Second Truce of the 1948 war, Israel came under intense international pressure to allow Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, farms, and businesses. In response, Moshe Sharett clearly formulated Israel's future policies towards the return of the refugees. In a letter to the Israeli mission at the UN on July 22, 1948, he explained Israeli's policy regarding refugees' return as follows:

"Out policy:

1) [Palestinian] Arab exodus direct result folly aggression organized by Arabs states. . . . [\[click here to read our response\]](#)

2) No question allowing [Palestinian] Arabs return while state of war continuing, as would mean introducing fifth Column, provision bases for enemies from outside and dislocation law and order inside. Exception only in favour special deserving cases compassionate grounds, subject security screening.

...

4) [Palestinian] Arab return can be decided only as part [of] peace settlement with Arab state[s] and in context its terms, when question confiscation property Jews neighboring countries and their future will also be raised." ([Benny Morris](#), p. 143)

It should be noted that this policy was formulated when the vast majority of the Arab Jews were residing in their corresponding Arab countries. In other words, this policy has not changed, not even one iota, since July 22, 1948, [click here](#) to read our response to this policy.

Contrary to what is often publicly stated, Israel rejected several peace offers soon after the 1948 war, especially the peace offers from Hussnie al-Za'em of Syria, H.M. King Farouk of Egypt, and H.M. King Abdullah of Transjordan. For example, Moshe Sharett noted in a report about a meeting he had with H.M. King Abdullah on May 5, 1949:

" Transjordan said---we are ready for peace immediately. We said--- of course, we too want peace, but we cannot run, we have to walk." ([Righteous Victims](#) p. 262). [Ben-Gurion](#) stated similar quotes as well.

During the armistice negotiations with Jordan in 1949, Israel pressured H.M. King Abdullah to concede control over [Wadi 'Ara](#) area (nearby Tulkarm and Jinin). For security reasons, Moshe Sharett assumed that the Palestinians living in the area would be expelled. He said:

"I imagine that the intention is to get rid of them. The interests of security demand that we get rid of them." ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 28)

Unfortunately, to Israelis and Zionists, Palestinians are a "congenital curse" whose mere existence is a "security risk" to the *Jewish state*. Tragically, this Israeli policy persists to the present day.

H.M. King Abdullah's father (al-Sharif al-Hussein) had a dream to control the "Great Syria". When this "dream" was not within reach of either him or his son, H.M King Abdullah sought alliance with the Zionist movement to achieve his father's "dream". According to several historians, such as [Avi Shlaim](#) and [Simha Flapan](#), the "dream" for a Hashmite controlled "Great Syria" was an obsession for both father and son. This "dream" was exploited by the Zionist leadership to drive a wedge between the neighboring Arab states. Ironically, the Arab countries whose armies entered Palestine on May 15th, 1948 did so to keep H.M. King

Abdullah from controlling the Palestinian portion of Palestine, which was allotted to Palestinian Arabs based on UN GA resolution 181. During a meeting with H.M. King Abdullah at *Shunah-Jordan*, which took place soon after Husni al-Zaim's coup in Syria, Moshe Sharett wrote in the spring of 1949:

"I explained that we would like to adjust our position on the Syrian question to theirs, as, in our view, they are the decisive factor in our relations with our neighbors, and Syria is unimportant. Abdullah's face did not conceal his satisfaction as he turned his head to his prime minister. Tawfiq Pasha said they were waiting to see how things would develop in Syria. . . . 'The man who took power has to pass the test of the people's trust. . . . ' I said: 'Your position is cautioned your biding your time?' and they said: 'Yes.' I said: 'What is your view about Syria as a state, should she remain in the present frontiers?' The king rose and said with great solemnity: 'You mean the idea of Greater Syria? This one of the principles of the Arab Revolt that I have been serving all my life.'" ([Simha Flapan](#), p. 146)

The tactic of misleading Abdullah with Syria was strongly endorsed by Yigal Yadin, the Israeli chief of staff. In a consultation between the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defense on April 12, 1949, Yidin reported:

"Abdullah is more interested in Greater Syria than in Palestine. This is in his blood, this is his political and military outlook and he is ready to sell out all the Palestinians in this aim. We have to know how to play this card to achieve our aim. . . . We should not support the plan of Greater Syria but we should divert Abdullah toward this plan." ([Simha Flapan](#), p. 146)

In response to announcement made by the Jewish Agency in mid-1949 that Israel would be willing to "take back" Palestinian refugees, and even to compensate them when the war ends, Moshe Sharett instructed his Director General not to repeat such announcement, and in that regard he stated:

"We must not be understood to say that once the war is over they [referring to Palestinian refugees] can return. We'll keep every option open." Then days later Sharett wrote Dr. Nahum Goldmann that

"the most spectacular event in the contemporary history of Palestine, in a way more spectacular than the creation of the Jewish state, is the wholesale evacuation of its [Palestinian] Arab population. . . . The opportunities opened up by the present reality for a lasting and radical solution of the most vexing problem of the Jewish state [referring to the [Palestinian Arabs](#) inhabiting area allotted to the "Jewish state" by the [1947 UN Partition plan](#)], are so far-reaching, as to take one's breath away. The reversion of the *status quo ante* is unthinkable." ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 29)

Soon after the war ended in 1949, the Israeli-Palestinian Arabs were systematically discriminated against, and for the most part were under direct military rule until 1966. Palestinian Arabs were confined to certain parts of the country, and they were also prevented from direct contact with civil and administrative officials, which eventually lead to a segregated society (one Arab and the other Jewish) in Israel up to the present day. In February 1950 Moshe Sharett warned his fellow ministers:

"There are a growing number of cases of [Palestinian] Arab citizens of Israel applying to members of the government and to central offices not via the authorized officials, i.e. the military governor or the local officers in charge of [Palestinian] Arab affairs. . . . All these applications share the desire to circumvent the local government and wish to avoid having to deal with it in the particular case, because that authority [military governor] is seen as unamenable to them. . . .

. . . . When there is a direct application by {Palestinian} Arabs who are residents of Israel, your offices should first verify the details of the cases in question with the appropriate local military authorities and not respond to the applicants until the matter has been clarified, and then do it in full cooperation with the authorized local government. Also, it would be preferable if the answer would not be given to the applicants directly, but that the final decision should be transmitted via local governor or the regional officer of [Palestinian] Arab affairs." ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 65)

While speaking to the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vishinsky in the early 1950s, Moshe Sharett expressed interests in receiving Eastern European Jewish immigrants over Moroccan Arab Jews. In his opinion "the Jews of Eastern Europe are the salt of the earth" who should take precedence over other Jews in immigrating to the "Jewish state", he said:

"There are countries---and I was referring to North Africa--- from which not all Jews need to emigrate. It is not so much of quantity as of quality. Our role in Israel is a pioneering one, and we need people with certain strength of fiber. We are very anxious to bring the Jews of Morocco over and we are doing all we can to achieve this. But we cannot count on the Jews of Morocco alone to build the country, because they have not been educated for this. We don't know what may yet happen to us, what military and political defeats we may yet have to face. So we need people who will remain steadfast in any hardship and who have a high degree of resistance. For the purpose of building up our country, I would say that the Jews of Eastern Europe are the salt of the earth. . . ."
(1949, [The First Israelis](#), p. 173)

During a meeting in July 1950, [Moshe Dayan](#) proclaimed that a peace treaty with Jordan would be costly in territorial concessions and return of refugees, and Israel should capture the West Bank up to the Jordan River. Moshe Sharett refuted this idea, and said:

"The State of Israel will not get embroiled in military adventurism by deliberately taking the initiative to capture territories and expand. Israel would not do that, both because we cannot afford to be accused by the world of aggression and because we cannot, for security and social reasons, absorb in our midst a substantial [Palestinian] Arab population We cannot sacrifice Jewish fighters, nor can we harm other in arbitrary fashion merely in order to satisfy the appetite of expansion." ([Iron Wall](#), p. 66)

While the UN was deliberating the Qibya Massacre (which was perpetuated by the Israeli Army's Unit # 101 that was headed by Ariel Sharon) in November 1953, Abba Eban sent a letter on the subject to Moshe Sharett, he wrote:

"Sending regular armed forces across an international border, without intention of triggering a full scale war, is a step that distinguishes Israel from all other countries. No other state acts in this way. It was this, matter than the heavy casualties [69 civilians murdered and 45 houses turned into rubble on top of the victims], that shocked the world." ([Iron Wall](#), p. 92)

And on October 15, 1953 Moshe Sharett also wrote about Qibya's Massacre:

"A reprisal of this magnitude has never been carried out before. I paced back and forth in my room perplexed and completely depressed, feeling helpless." Sharett had rather halfheartedly tried to halt the operation. But he if known in advance there would be "so much killing," he subsequently wrote, "I would have screamed to high heaven." ([Righteous Victims](#), p. 278)

Moshe Sharett proposed means of ending the conflict with the Arabs in nonmilitary way. He wrote in October 1953:

"[We should be] activating solution to the [Palestinian] refugee problem by bold and concrete offer on our part to pay compensation; restoring good relations with the great powers, ceaseless struggle for an understanding with Egypt. Each of these courses of action is liable to take us into a vicious circle, and yet we are not exempt from struggling and trying." ([Iron Wall](#), p. 93-94)

On the orders of Pinhas Lavon, Israel's Defense Minister, the Israeli Air Force intercepted a civilian Syrian airliner in December 1955, and ordered it to land in Israel. This act of "piracy", which was the first in the Middle East, was done with the intention to use the civilian passengers and crews as hostages in return for five Israeli soldiers who infiltrated Syria on espionage mission on December 8th, 1954. Moshe Sharett was enraged by this act of "piracy", and said that Israel had to choose between being:

"a state of law and a state of piracy." ([Iron Wall](#), p. 116)

When [Moshe Dayan](#) and [Ben-Gurion](#) were debating the feasibility of interfering with Lebanon's internal politics and destabilizing Syria. Moshe Sharett wrote in his diary:

"I saw clearly how those who saved the state so heroically and courageously in the War of Independence would be capable of bringing a catastrophe upon it if they are given the chance in normal times." ([Iron Wall](#), p. 134)

Similarly, Sharett also wrote on the same subject:

"the lack of seriousness exhibited by the [military brass, including Ben-Gurion] . . . in its approach to the affairs of the neighboring countries and especially toward the most complicated problem of Lebanon's internal and external situation was simply horrifying." ([Righteous Victims](#), p. 498)

When Israeli Foreign Ministry and Defense officials advised of initiating a [preventive] war against Egypt before it rebuilt its army, Moshe Sharett wrote in his diary on October 12th, 1955 :

"What is our vision on this earth---war to the end of all generations and life by the sword?" ([Iron Wall](#), p. 140)

and on the same subject he also state in December:

"I am against preventive war because it can turn into general war, to a ring of fire all around us, rather than be restricted to war with Egypt. I am against preventive war because that which did not occur in the War of Independence may occur, namely intervention by foreign power against us. . . . I am against intervention by a foreign power against us. . . . I am against preventive war because it means measures by the UN against us. I am against preventive war because it means injury and damage at home, the destruction of settlements, and the spilling of much blood." ([Iron Wall](#), p. 152)

In the mid-1950s, [Moshe Dayan](#) was itching to initiate a "preventive" war against Egypt to neutralize the modernization of its army, according to Moshe Sharett's diary:

"Moshe Dayan unfolded one plan after another for direct action. The first---what should be done to force open blockade of the Gulf of Eilat . A ship flying the Israeli flag should be sent, and if the Egyptians bomb it, we should bomb the Egyptian base from the air, or conquer Ras al-Naqb, or open our way south of Gaza Strip to the coast. There was a general uproar. I asked Moshe: *Do you realize that this would mean war with Egypt?*, he said: *Of course.*" ([Iron Wall](#), p. 105)

In response to the massive retaliations and humiliating punishments to force the neighboring countries to control Palestinian cross border "infiltration" (a term that is often used in Israel to imply return), Moshe Sharett stated in 1955:

"In the thirties [during the 1st Palestinian Intifada] we restrained the emotions of revenge and we educated the public to consider revenge as an absolutely negative impulse. Now, on the contrary, we justify the system of reprisals out of pragmatic considerations . . . we eliminated the mental and moral brakes on this instinct and made it possible . . . to uphold revenge as a moral value." ([Simha Flapan](#), p. 237)

Similarly, in 1955 Sharett wrote in his diary how the Israeli Army become accustomed to harsh reprisals against its Arab neighbors:

"Curious people who have become accustomed to think that one cannot sustain the moral of the army without giving it the freedom to shed blood from time to time." ([Iron Wall](#), p. 117)

A deep political rift had gradually opened between the activists led by [Ben-Gurion](#), backed by the army and the intelligence services, and the moderates, led by Moshe Sharett, who was supported by the Foreign Ministry. The hard-liners enjoyed the support of the bulk of the public, though occasionally Sharett mustered a cabinet majority to thwart this or that plan or action. In 1957 Moshe Sharett defined the two approaches as the following:

"The activists believe that the Arabs understand only the language of force [[click here](#) to read our response]. . . . The state of Israel must, from time to time, prove clearly that it is strong, and able and willing to use force, in a devastating and highly effective way. If it does not prove this, it will be swallowed up, and perhaps wiped off the face of the earth. As to peace----this approach states--- it is in any case doubtful; in any case, very remote. If peace comes, it will come only if [the Arabs] are convinced that this country cannot be beaten. . . . If [retaliatory] operations . . . rekindle the fires of hatred, that is no cause for fear for fires will be fuelled in any event. . . .

The other approach [is that] not even for one moment must the matter of peace vanish from our calculation. This is not only a political calculation; in the long run, this is a decisive security consideration [as well] We must restrain our responses [to Arab attacks] An there is always the question: is it really proven that retaliatory actions solve the security problem?." ([Righteous Victims](#), p. 280)

As Moshe Sharett was ending his career, he came to the conclusion that Israel could not be ruled without deceit. Deceit was essential for the *Jewish state's* survival. He was becoming increasingly vocal against the hawkish Cabinet that wanted to invade and annex the Sinai, West Bank, and southern Lebanon. In response, he stated the following just before being forced to resign by Ben-Gurion:

"I have learned that the state of Israel cannot be ruled in our generation without deceit and adventurism. These are historical facts that cannot be altered. . . In the end, history will justify both the stratagems and deceit and the acts of adventurism. All I know is that I, Moshe Sharett, am not capable of them, and I am therefore unsuited to lead this country." ([Simha Flapan](#), p. 52-53)

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